

Minutes

Talbot County Board of Elections
215 Bay Street
Easton, MD 21601
August 18, 2021

Attendance

Board Members Present

Joseph Secrist, President	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Richard Bulman	(R)
Wadella Thomas *	(R)
Susan MacKinnon *	(D)

Staff

Jeri Cook, Election Director

Board Attorney

Lyndsey Ryan

Public

None

* Via video conferencing

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held August 18, 2021 in Conference Room # One at the Board office indicated above. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Secrist noted that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meetings of July 14, 2021 and August 2, 2021, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Mr. Black moved approval of the minutes as presented. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Addition/Changes to the Agenda

Mr. Secrist asked that the Closed Session include a Personnel Matter. Bulman moved approval of the agenda with this addition. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Election Director's Report

Ms. Cook provided a written report of the activities of the staff prior to the meeting. A copy of that report is attached. She elaborated on her written report as follows:

- There has been no input from voters requesting additional locations.
- With regard to the relocation of polling places for Bozman and Oxford, Ms. Cook provided copies of House Bill 353 which became law on July 1, 2017. The provisions of this bill include the procedure to notify the public before approving any changes for election polling locations.
- The lawsuit brought by the National Federation for the Blind has been settled per a press release. She had no details regarding the settlement, but the issue in the suit is regarding the use of the Ballot Marking Devices.
- Ms. Cook asked the Board to consider if there will continue to be a need to have meetings conducted both in-person and virtually so as to allow our contractor to include our need for video services in his schedule.

Board Attorney's Report

Ms. Ryan discussed the response the Election Board received to our letter to Kevin Shafer of the Board of Education regarding the agreement to lease space for the upcoming Gubernatorial Primary and General Elections. She noted that the Board of Education next meets on September 15 and the school calendar for 2022-23 will be on the agenda. He will take no action on our request until after that is approved. A discussion among the Board Members, Ms. Ryan and Ms. Cook was held regarding how to respond to Mr. Shafer's letter and our request regarding the closing of schools on election days. Ms. Cook was asked to send data and other factual information to Board Members for their use in approaching Board of Education Members and others to familiarize them on the strong need to close schools on election days.

Old Business

a. Facility for Election Office

Regarding space requirements, Ms. Cook provided copies of draft County Government space needs study which, she reports, appears to provide the space we had asked the county to provide and our request to have the election office under one roof.

b. Polling place updates

Bozman polling place at Bozman United Methodist Church is no longer available and there is no other suitable facility in the district/precinct. After surveying alternatives, the consolidation of the Bozman district /precinct 02002 with the St. Michaels district/precinct 02001 appears to be the most logical alternative. Additionally, regarding the Oxford district/precinct 03003, the space that Oxford Community Center now has available for polling is very limited and not fully ADA compliant. Ms. Cook Mr. Fred Gloeckler conducted an initial survey at the Oxford Firehouse the use of their facility for polling and they willing to become the new polling place. The Firehouse is fully ADA compliant.

Ms. Cook provided Board Members with draft postcard notice for voters in the Bozman district/precinct regarding a change in polling location and a public hearing to be held, as required by HB 353. After discussion by the Board, Ms. MacKinnon moved that the Election Director be authorized to mail postcard notices (1) to voters in the Bozman district /precinct 02002 essentially as presented by Ms. Cook, with a hearing to allow for public input be held at the September 2021 Board meeting and (2) to the voters in the Oxford district /precinct 03003 essentially in the form presented for the Bozman district/precinct, modified to reflect the particulars of the Oxford district/precinct 03003, and that the Board hold a public hearing at its September 2021 meeting regarding the proposed changes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Black and passed unanimously.

c. Budget FY2021

Ms. Cook previously provided reports on expenditures recorded by the county through June. She anticipates additional expenses to be recorded.

d. Review of Invoices

Ms. Cook previously provided Board Members with copies of invoices received since the last meeting. There were no questions from Board Members.

e. County Bulletins

Ms. Cook previously provided copies of County Bulletins. There were no questions from Board Members.

f. Budget FY2022

Ms. Cook provided copies of the spreadsheet for the current budget with expenditures as of this meeting. There were no questions.

g. MAEO/Biennial conference

Ms. Cook noted that materials regarding the upcoming MAEO conference and State Biennial meeting were included in the packet for this meeting.

New Business

a. Board meetings – in person and virtual

Ms. Cook provided copies of an email from Andover Media regarding its offer to provide video conferencing for Board meetings. This service is needed if the Board chooses to offer video conference capability as well as in-person participation for attendance at meetings. After discussion of the proposal and the possible increased participation at the September meeting due to the hearings regarding the relocation of the Bozman and Oxford polling places, Ms. MacKinnon moved that the Board engage Andover Media to provide video conferencing for the September meeting to supplement in-person participation. Mr. Black seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Closed Session

Mr. Black moved that the Board go into closed session for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals as permitted under General Provisions Art. 3-305(b) (1). Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Whereupon the Board went into closed session at 11:20 a.m. Present at this session were Board Members Mr. Secrist, Mr. Black, Ms. Thomas, Ms. MacKinnon and Mr. Bulman. Election Director Jeri Cook and Board Attorney Lyndsey Ryan were also present.

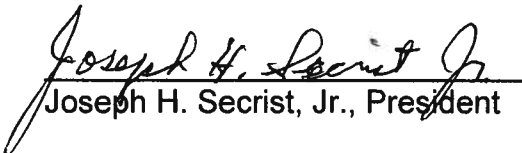
At 12:30 p.m. the Board returned to open session. President Secrist reported that the Board discussed specifics regarding the personnel issue but took no action. The Board also approved the minutes of the Closed Meeting of August 6, 2021.

Adjournment

Mr. Black moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.

Attested,

Respectfully submitted,


Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President


Richard B. Bulman, Secretary

August 2021 – Director's Report

- Does the board feel there is a need for any additional drop boxes?
 - This will require additional needs for staffing.
 - Did the two locations seem effective?
 - This is not mandated by the state.
- Proposed postcard (2 on a sheet) in packet to be approved
 - Upon approval, will implement any changes made by the board and send to the printer
 - Sent a copy to the printer and he said the original quote would be good, as far as adding color, etc.
 - Spoke with State and they agreed with my recommendation for notifying the voters
- Oxford Community Center will not be able to accommodate the Primary, except in the very small back room with lots of mirrors and does not have ADA compliant entrance at the back of the center. I have reached out to the Oxford Firehouse and they are willing to become the new polling place. Conducted a site survey, Friday, August 6 and results will be presented to the board.
 - The change will be made to MDVoters, which will generate a new VNC for those affected by the change and it will be on the sample ballot
 - We will post signs of the change at the Oxford Community Center (back and front of building) as well as signs at the new location.
 - If approved, I will ask for the electronic sign at the firehouse to note the change
- Fred conducted follow up calls for the polling places
 - Received Talbot Community Center and Cordova VFD
 - We are still waiting for Easton VFD (ED & EV), Trappe VFD, and the schools.
- Met with Mark Cohoon in reference to the new office – county is working on the final draft of the space analysis and once complete the next part of the process is the county finding space for us. The plan is to have the entire election office under one roof, with room for growth.
- You received your ballot for MAEO in your packet. If you mail them back, the ballot must be received in Baltimore County by 4:00 pm on August 20. There will be a drop box at the conference to place your ballot and must be dropped off by 11:00 am on August 26.
- Some iGo conference highlights:
 - 32 states were represented and 1 international member attended
 - There was a speaker discussing the security of the elections as well as election officials after the threats in 2020
 - The EAC commissioners spoke on the current report of the 2020 election – can be found on their website
 - Information about the success of vote by mail in other states – voters like this option and the use has increased over the years
 - There was a large trade show and able to see the voting equipment, including vendors with pollbooks
 - Got an opportunity to network with other states and jurisdictions about their election processes

- 12 members went to the conference from Maryland. And Christine Jones, Queen Anne's County Director was installed as the 2nd Vice President of the organization.
- Received a phone call from Kevin Schaeffer in reference to the letter that was sent. The response is in the board packet.
 - He will be responding to the board formally, but wanted to let me know that the leadership is against closing schools for voting purposes for a "mid-term election" because most people use early voting and other polling places throughout the county. I explained that voters will only be able to go to their assigned location for election day.
 - I also explained that the need for a secure and accessible location for the voters is not possible with the auditorium area of Easton High School and that it is suppressing voters from voting. There is no accessible ADA entrance for voters.
 - His recommendation is to be placed on the September agenda, again. He believes is the third Wednesday of the month.
 - I asked why, since virtual learning was used last school year, it couldn't be used for this one day. He said he does not believe it will be an option. He compared to the closure for election day to a snow day.
 - Sent pictures to Justinian in reference to using his services for both inperson and virtual meetings. I have sent him pictures of the conference room and awaiting his quote for services. Once you decide if you want to have this service, I will then book him for the board meetings through December.